Human Resources Development Ministry and Tourism Ministry into confidence to evolve a policy not only to preserve and protect but also to attract tourists from abroad, as well as rehabilitating the population already staying there. Since you have already mooted the idea of trying to get it declared as a UNESCO Heritage Site, naturally I would like to know whether you have taken into consideration the question of proper rehabilitation of the people staying over there.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, the Majuli Island has a poulation of 1.3 lakh and knowing fully well about the rich cultural as well as natural heritage, a Committee headed by Shri S.K. Das was sent there for a site-study. They have given their report which clearly reveals that the value of the Majuli Island is mainly in its cultural heritage component, particularly the evolution of the Vaishanav religion, art and culture. As regards the natural value, with the distinctive features of natural beauty and aesthetic importance, it is the largest river island in the world. There is, however, no mention of any endemic species of flora and fauna to establish distinctive endemic natural value. So, my point of view is that the voluntary relocation should be funded and an action plan may be prepared in this regard.

SHRI KULDIP NAYYAR: Sir, I want to know whether this island is going to be properly defended against the activities of the ULFA because sometime back a very leading human rights activist was murdered there and till today there is no trace of that.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, the question does not fall within the domain of my Ministry. This question pertains to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Funds for Quilon-Tirunelveli-Thruchendur and Tenkasi-Virudhunagar rail lines

*285. SHRI P. SOUNDARARAJAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the estimated cost of Quilon-Tirunelveli-Tiruchendur-Tenkasi-Virudhunagar rail lines;

(b) how much amount has been sanctioned so far;

(c) what amount of funds is proposed to be allocated during the next financial year; and

(d) by when the project is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) Rs. 280 crores.

(b) Rs. 10.001 crores.

(c) Will be known only when the Railway Budget for 2000-2001 is presented to Parliament.

(d) The work will be progressed and completed in the coming years as per availability of resources. The target date has not yet been fixed.

SHRI P. SOUNDARARAJAN: Sir, Tamil Nadu has 2200 kms. of the metre gauge which is more than the broad gauge length of 1980 kms. Due to the large extension of metre gauge, many areas like Rajapalayam, Sivakasi, Tenkasi, Kurtallam, Kayalpattanam and Tiruchendur of Tamil Nadu do not have through connection with the rest of the country. In 1991 the Government had committeed to convert the entire railway network into unigauge in 10 years time. Therefore, a fixed timeframe is necessary. Though Rs. 10 crores have been sanctioned, the work has not started so far. Therefore, I would like to know from the Minister as to how much money has been spent so far, and whether she will give an assurance to allocated at least Rs. SO crores in the next Budget.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Sir, regarding this line... *(Interruptions)...*

AN HON. MEMBER: The former Railway Minister inaugurated it. *...(Interruptions)...*

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Then the Question Hour will be over....*(Interruptions)*...Sir, the hon. Member is interested to know the details of the two projects. Sir, one project was sanctioned in 1998-99, but we got the clearance only in the ninth of November.

An amount of Rs. 280 crore is involved and only Rs, 10 crores have been spent up to 31.3.1999. Sir, Rs. 10 crore have been given in the Budget and next time we want to see that this project is expedited.

SHRI P. SOUNDARARAJAN: Sir, over the last 17 years metre gauge coaches have not been repalced due to unigauge conversion project. These coaches have corrosions in the underframes and are said to be unsafe. Therefore, will the hon. Minister give priority in completing this as well as the other B.G. conversion projects in Tamil Nadu in order to avoid any unforeseen event due to corroded coaches which are being run there?

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Sir, we want that the Chennai and the other projects are completed. Both the places are very important especially Sivakasi. We want to cmplete these projects. Of course, it also depends on the availability of the funds. But, we will give it priority.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Reduction in Strenghth of Coaches in Ajmer

†*286. SHRI ONKAR SINGH LAKHAWAT: Will the minister of CULTURE, YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sports Authority of India had started a training centr&hostel in Ajmer, if so, what was the amount spent in this regard during the last four years, the discipline-wise number of sportsmen trained there in various sports disciplines; and

†Original Notice of the Question was received in Hindi.